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ABSTRACT

The data which has accumulated at the National Opinion Research Center over the past several years on the differential personality constellations of eight American white ethnic groups seemingly offer conclusive evidence that even when social class is held constant, immense differences of personalities have persisted among these groups. Among American ethnic groups there is a positive correlation between sympathy for racial integration and identification with and involvement in the ethnic community. There are four other major observations that can be made about the subject of diversity in the United States: (1) most Americans feel ambivalent about the fact of diversity and also about their own particular location in ethnic geography; (2) precisely because of this ambivalence about American cultural pluralism, there has been in the last quarter of a century relatively little in the way of serious research on the subject despite the fact that the later stages of the acculturation of the immigrant groups should have been considered a fascinating subject for social science; (3) on the whole, American social and cultural pluralism has worked rather well; and, (4) for a number of different reasons, there has been a dramatic increase in interest in America's cultural heterogeneity in recent years. (Author/JM)

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THE REDISCOVERY OF DIVERSITY

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THE REDISCOVERY OF DIVERSITY

For those of us who read serious newspapers, magazines, and books, the most important conflict that has divided man in the last two and a half decades has been ideological. The critical question for us is where one stands in relationship to Karl Marx. Is the man a capitalist or a socialist? Is he a citizen of the free world, or does he live behind the Iron Curtain? Is he on the side of the "imperialists" or of the "people's democracies?" But in fact the conflicts that have occupied most men in the last quarter century and which have led to the most horrendous outpourings of blood have had precious little to do with this ideological division. Most of us are quite unwilling to battle to the death over ideology, but practically all of us, it seems, are ready to kill each other over really important differences: that is, differences of color, language, religious faith, height, food habits, and facial expression.

Many millions have died tragically in what are purported to be ideological conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, but many more millions, perhaps as many as twenty million, have died in conflicts that have to do with far more ancient divisions than those between the capitalists and the socialists. One need only think of the Hindus and Moslems at the time of the partition of India, of Sudenese blacks and Arabs, of Tutsi and Hutu in Burundi, of Kurds in Iraq, of Nagas in India, of Karens and Kachins in Burma, of Chinese in Indonesia and Malaysia, of Khambas

in Tibet, of Somalis in Kenya and Ethiopia, of Arabs in Zanzibar, of Berbers in Morocco and Algeria, of East Indians, Negroes, American Indians, Indians in Guiana, of Ibos in Nigeria, and, more recently, of Bengali in East Pakistan to realize how pervasive is what might be broadly called "ethnic" conflict and how incredible the numbers of people who have died in such "irrational" battles. Two million died in India, five hundred thousand perished in the "unknown" war in the Sudan, and two hundred thousand more in the equally unknown war in Burundi. The numbers may have been over a million in Biafra and over a half million in Malaysia and Indonesia and as high as one hundred thousand in Burma and Iraq.

The ethnic conflicts have not been so bloody in other parts of the world, but tens of thousands have died in the seemingly endless battle between those two very Semitic people, the Jews and the Arabs. The English and the French glare hostilely at each other in Quebec; Christian and Moslem have renewed their ancient conflicts on the island of Mindanao; Turk and Greek nervously grip their guns on Cyprus; and Celt and Saxon in Ulster have begun imprisoning and killing one another with all the old vigor of a thousand years' hostility.

Even when there is practically no violence, tension and conflict still persist as the old nationalisms of Wales, Scotland, Brittany, Catalonia and Navarre, Flanders, and even the Isle of Man appear once again. In the world of socialism, Great Slav and Little Slav do not trust each other, and Slav and Oriental have renewed their ancient

feuds. In addition, the rulers of the Slavic socialists states are troubled by internal conflict. What, for example, are the Great Russians to do about the Little Russians, much less about the Volga Germans or the Kahsacks, to say nothing of the Crimean Tartars? The new masters of Czechoslovakia still struggle with the ancient conflict between Prague and Bratislava. Finally, the old partisan leader, Marshall Tito, spends his last years trying desperately to hold his polyglot peoples' democracy together.

In a world of nuclear energy, the jet engine, the computer, and the rationalized organization, the principal conflicts are not ideological but tribal. Those differences among men which were supposed to be swept away by science and technology and political revolution are as destructive as ever.

Indeed, if anything, the conflicts seem to be increasing rather than decreasing. Just as the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire increased tension in central Europe, so the collapse of the old colonial empires has opened a Pandora's box of tribal, linguistic, religious, and cultural conflicts. It may also be that the "turning in on oneself" which follows the relinquishing of imperial power has given rise to the new nationalisms in Western Europe. Finally, it seems that the failure of both capitalism and socialism to deliver on their promises of economic prosperity for all are responsible for the tensions both in Eastern Europe and between black and white in the United States. Men were promised affluence and dignity if they yielded their old primordial

ties. They now suspect that the promise was an empty one and are returning to those primordial ties with a vengence.

The differences over which we kill each other are relatively minor. It is not those who are tremendously different from us that we slay or hate; it is rather those similar to us. Punjabi and Bengali share the same religion; they differ only in geography and to some extent in skin color. A Canadian would be hard put to tell the difference between an Ibo, a Hausa, a Fulani, and a Yoruba. The difference between a French and English Canadian would escape all but the most sophisticated Yoruba. A Kurd could not tell a Fleming from a Walloon on a street in Brussels. Most Africans would be struck by the similarity in eveything but skin color between American blacks and American whites. An American black, in his turn, would find it very difficult to tell the difference between Catholic brogue and Protestant brogue in Ulster. An Indonesian would be properly horrified at the thought that he looked rather like a Filipino, but he would not understand how a Greek could distinguish another Greek from a Turk or even how one could tell the difference between Jew and Arab. The differences over which we human beings take arms can be very minor indeed.

I sometimes speculate that the incredible diversity of the human race is a great joke of a humorous God; He finds it hilarious, but we have not quite gotten around to laughing yet.

But what is the nature of this primal diversity over which we so eagerly do battle? The question is easy to ask but extremely difficult

to answer. With his characteristic elegance, Clifford Geertz observes:

> When we speak of "communalism" in India we refer to religious contrasts; when we speak of it in Malaya we are mainly concerned with racial ones, and in the Congo with tribal ones. But the grouping under a common grouping is not simply adventitious; the phenomena referred to are in some way similar. Regionalism has been the main theme in Indonesian disaffection, differences in custom in Moroccan. The Tamil minority in Ceylon is set off from the Sinhalese majority by religion, language, race, region, and social custom; the Shiite minority in Iraq is set off from the dominant Sunnis virtually by an intra-Islamic sectarian difference alone. Pan-national movements in Africa are largely based on race, in Kurdistan on tribalism; in Laos, the Shan, and Thailand, on language. Yet all these phenomena, too, are in some sense of a piece. They form a definable field of investigation.
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> That is they would, could we but define it.[1]

But Geertz at least attempts a definition. Leaning on a concept introduced by Edward Shils,[2] Geertz suggests that what we are dealing with is "primordial attachments."

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens"--or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the "assumed" givens--of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them, the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of language, and following particular social patterns. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto, as a result not merely of one's personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by the virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of

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[1] Clifford Geertz, "The Integrated Revolution " in Old Societies And New Societies edited by Clifford Geertz. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963.

[2] Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties." British Journal of Sociology, June, 1957.

> such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. But for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural--some would say spiritual--affinity than from social interaction.[3]

It is the primordial tie, then, according to Geertz, a "longing not to belong to any other group," that is essential to what is broadly defined as "ethnic" behavior.

Following Geertz, Professor Harold Isaacs speaks of "basic group identity," which is not merely related to a need to be special or unique or different from others; it is fundamental to an individual's sense of belongingness and to the level of his self-esteem.

> In my own mind, I picture group identity as looking more like a cell of living matter with a sprawling, irregular shape. It is a part of a cluster of cells making up the ego identity, sharing elements and common membranes with that other elusive quarry, the "individual personality." In it, floating or darting about, are specks and flecks, bits and pieces, big shapes, little shapes, intersecting each other or hanging loose or clinging to one another, some out at the margins, some nearer the middle, some in wide orbits around the edges, some more narrowly moving deeper inside, but each one impinging upon, drawn to or repelled by a nuclear core that exerts gravity upon them all and fixes the shape and content of the messages that go out along the tiny meshes of the nervous system. The arrangement and mutual relationship of these elements differ from cell to cell, and the nature of the nuclear core differs not only from cell to cell but can change within any one cell, all of these interactions having a fluid character and subject to alteration under the pressure of conditions that come in upon them from the outside.
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> I think, in the inwardness of group identity is where we can learn more than we know now about the interactions of the individual, his group, and the larger politics of

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[3] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

> his time and place, and more therefore, about the nature of our own contempory experience.[4]

Both Isaacs and Geertz are deeply indebted to Edward Shils for his ideas of primordial ties (as is the present writer). In his famous article in the 1957 British Journal of Sociology, Shils comments:

> Man is much more concerned with what is near at hand, with what is present and concrete than with what is remote and abstract. He is more responsive on the whole to persons, to the status of those who surround him, and the justice which he sees in his own situation than he is with the symbols of remote persons, with the total status system in the society and with the global system of judgment. Immediately present authorities engage his mind more than remote ones. . . . That is why the ideologist, be he prophet or revolutionary, is affronted by the ordinary man's attachment to his mates, to his home, to his pub, to his family, to his petty vanities and his job, to his vulgar gratifications, to his concern for the improvement of his conditions of life. That is also why the ideologist dislikes the politician, who aspires to do no more than to help keep things running and to make piecemeal change, and of course, the businessman, the manager, the technologist who brooks an ultimate affront . . . 5

The striking thing about the comments of Isaacs, Geertz, and Shils is that they all use a rhetoric which is uncommonly poetic for the social sciences. Part of the poetry is no doubt the result of the fact that the three men are masters of English style, but part of it too, I suspect, comes from the fact that they are dealing with something so basic and so fundamental in the human condition that prose is not altogether adequate in dealing with it. The primordial ties penetrate to the core of the human person perhaps

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[4] Harold Isaacs, "Group Identity And Political Change," Bulletin of the International House of Japan, April, 1964, pp. 24-25.

[5] Edward Shils, op. cit., pp. 130-131.

because in the most literal sense of the word it touches man where he really is.

And since it has to do with something which is so extremely basic in man's life, it is not at all a mystery that man is willing, indeed, almost eager, to die in the defense of that primordial tie. As Harold Isaacs pointed out at the September, 1971, meetings of the American Political Science Association, much of what is evil in the human condition--as well as much of what is good--flows from a man's primal sense of belonging to something that makes him a somebody.

When we consider all the evil that flows from ethnic diversity, we are strongly tempted to conclude that such diversity should be done away with. Peace and harmony will come to the world through rational, liberal, scientific, democratic homogenization. There was a time when such optimistic liberal faith did not seem naive. It must be confessed that many illustrious Americans still subscribe to that faith: "ethnicity" is part of man's primal, primitive, and prerational (which of course means irrational) past, a past out of which he is supposed to be evolving. With more faith in science, with more experience in political democracy, with more of the advantages of economic progress, with more replacement of the sacred by the secular, man will finally, to use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase, "come of age." He will not need the tribal,and all the paraphernalia of his old prerational,superstitious,unscientific past can safely be shed.

When Professor Harvey Cox wrote his now famous Secular City, such a liberal optimistic faith seemed justified. But Professor Cox

himself has made a pilgrimage from the Secular City to The Feast of Fools, a medieval feast that takes in place in a festive and fantastic Camelot. The mood of American academia today is one of massive apostasy from liberal rationalism.

One need not swing quite as far as Professor Cox and others have from the dialectics of the rational to the irrational to recognize that not by reason alone does man live. The collapse of the empires and modernization, both of which were supposed to bring liberal democracy and rational secularism to the uttermost parts of the earth, have instead produced a resurgence of the tribe and the clan. Under such circumstances, every man must reconsider the possibility and the desirability of homogenization. At a time when many in the American academy rigorously support what they take to be black separatism--and at times enforce such separatism on blacks who might not be inclined in that direction-- it is hardly possible or logical to insist that everybody else be homogenized.

But we are dealing with far more than the abandonment of one fad for another and an overhasty and naive apostasy of a naively held scientific faith. Serious scholars like Shils, Geertz, Izaacs, Glazer, and Moynihan have offered persuasive evidence of the persistence of diversity. The profound and ingenious work of Chomsky in linguistics and Levi-Strauss in anthropology suggests that diversity might be "structured into" the human experience. Man has no other way to cope with the reality in which he finds himself, including the reality of his own relationship network, than by differentiating it. Such a view of things suggests that

the hope of unity through homogenization was not just naive and premature but also betrayed a profound misunderstanding of the condition of the human condition. Diversity may lead to hellish miseries in the world, but without the power to diversify--and to locate himself somewhere in the midst of the diversity--man may not be able to cope with the world at all.

To descend briefly from the cosmic level of macro-social theory to the grubby data of survey research, my colleagues,Norman Nie and Barbara Currie, and I have discovered that among American ethnic groups there is a positive correlation between sympathy for integration and identification with and involvement in the ethnic community. The more "ethnic" a southern and eastern European Catholic is the more likely he is to be pro-integration--and,incidentally, the more likely he is to be a dove on the Vietnam war. This finding, which flies directly in the teeth of the well-nigh unanimous conventional wisdom about southern and eastern European Catholics, raises the interesting possibility that diversity in"basic group identification" may under certain sets of circumstances be more than just a heavy burden for society; it may even be on occasion a positive asset.

With such a theoretical backdrop, let us now turn to the more specific question of religious, racial, geographic, and ethnic[6] diversity in American society. There are five major observations that can be made

[6]"Ethnic" is now used in the sense of "nationality." In the nominalism of American survey research, there are ten basic religio-ethnic groups in American society, a number based not on any astrological mysticism nor any complex theory, but simply on the humber of respondents available for analysis in an ordinary sized national sample. They are: Anglo-Saxon Protestants, German Protestants, Scandinavian Protestants, Irish Catholics, German Catholics, southern European Catholics, eastern European Catholics, Jews, blacks, and Spanish speaking.

about the subject of diversity in the United States.

1. Most Americans feel ambivalent about the fact of diversity and also about their own particular location in ethnic geography. We are torn between pride in the heritage of our own group and resentment at being trapped in that heritage.[7] This ambivalence is probably the result of the agonies of the acculturation experience in which an immigrant group alternated between shame over the fact that it was different and unwanted and a defensive pride about its own excellence, which the rest of society seemed neither to appreciate nor understand. It is that ambivalence which produced the superpatriotism that Daniel P. Moynihan neatly epitomized in his remark about the McCarthy(Joseph) era: "Harvard men were to be investigated and Fordham men were to do the investigating." The superpatriot is the man who is proud of his own uniqueness and yet simultaneously wants to be like everyone else, only more so.

The ambivalence about one's own specific contribution to diversity is clear in both the Irish and the Jewish novels. Jewish authors, it has always seemed to me, achieve a much better balance of self-acceptance and self-rejection than do their Irish counterparts. One need only compare James Farrell with Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow with Tom McHale[8] to discover that the Jewish writers are much more at ease with who and what they are than the Irish are. Perhaps the years of persecution of Jew by Christian did not have nearly the impact on Jewish self-respect

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[7] An ambivalence which is surely not absent from this issue of The Antioch Review.

[8] Or to take a more extreme case: Philip Roth is surely ambivalent about being Jewish. John O'Hara was not ambivalent about being Irish; he was ashamed of it.

that the millennium of political oppression of the Irish by the English had on Irish self-respect.

The Anglo-Saxon Protestant may be free of this ambivalence, though if he is there are enough strains towards guilt in the American Protestant consciousness to even the score. But whatever is to be said of the WASP, all those who came after him wanted to be different yet feel uneasy and guilty about being different. We praise the melting pot out of one side of our mouths and honor cultural pluralism out of the other.

2. Precisely because of this ambivalence about American cultural pluralism, there has been in the last quarter of a century relatively little in the way of serious research on the subject despite the fact that the later stages of the acculturation of the immigrant groups should have been considered a fascinating subject for social science. One can look through the indices of the various sociological and psychological journals for the last three decades and find practically nothing on the subject of American ethnic groups--a lack which is even more difficult to understand when one knows that there is a vast market for such research.[9] Until a year or two ago, practically no survey questionnaires had an ethnic question. Even today, the Gallup organization does not routinely ask about ethnicity, and probably a majority of survey questionnaires

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[9]Nathan Glazer's and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Beyond the Melting Pot has sold over a half million copies.

still contain no such item. During the 1960s, those of us who maintained some sort of interest in the subject periodically had to explain to skeptical colleagues that what we were concerned about was a legitimate field of research. The presumption seemed to have been that there was nothing there to study, or that even if there was something to study, it was somehow immoral to do it. Even today, there is a considerable residue of skepticism on the subject of ethnic diversity. (A skepticism which coexists, incidentally, with an incredible flow of anecdotes about ethnic diversity, a flow which is released when the ethnic researcher persuades his colleagues that it is, after all, legitimate to discuss the subject. Indeed, many a conversation which begins with one social scientist politely but firmly suggesting that the ethnic researcher might be a charlatan ends up with collective nostalgia about respective ethnic childhoods.)

In addition to our generalized ambivalence about diversity, there are a number of more specific explanations for the lack of serious research on the subject.

Research acknowledges that diversity has persisted and that it is likely to continue to persist. Such an assumption is at odds with the still dominant assimilationist ideology, an ideology that is, if anything, more important to those who are being assimilated than to those who are doing the assimilating. The idea that it is an admirable goal for all Americans to become alike is deeply rooted in our collective unconscious, reinforced by the mass media, emphasized by the ideology of public education (one remembers Dr. Conant's notion that it was only the

public high school which could eliminate the divisiveness and provide the common culture to integrate the society--the common culture, of course, was to be white Protestant), and honored by many of the symbols of our political rhetoric. The assimilationist assumptions, though rarely stated explicitly in recent years, were institutionalized in the immigration laws recommended by the famous Dillingham Commission. Nobody says anymore--as the Dillingham Commission virtually did--that Anglo-Saxon culture is superior to southern and eastern European culture; nobody says that American society had a very difficult time in "Americanizing" the Italian, Slavic, and, yes, even the German and Irish immigrant groups. But the idea that "Americanization" means the conversion of later immigrants into something that looks very much like a white Protestant (and as Peter Rossi has remarked, someone who speaks radio-standard English) has yet to be exorcized from the collective unconscious.

It is very difficult to deal with the assimilationist mentality, particularly because it is usually implicit, and especially in circumstances when the assimilationis is someone who himself is in the process of assimilation. Anyone who lectures even to scholarly audiences on the subject of ethnic diversity is almost certain to be asked whether after all the emphasis on diversity is not dangerous, since it stresses those things which separate men rather than those things which unite him. He is also likely to be cornered before he leaves the lecture hall by an eager questioner who wonders whether it isn't true that after all the Irish (for example) have become "just like everyone else." What makes

it even more difficult to cope with these questions is that those who ask them frequently bear names that indicate they were scarcely born white Protestants. The last one who wants to hear that diversity is now acceptable is he who has embarked, perhaps irrevocably, on the process of liquidating his own diversity. The sociolgoist Paul Metzger has appropriate comments to make on "liberal assimilationism" in a recent article in the American Journal of Sociology.

> 1. The belief that racial assimilation constitutes the only democratic solution to the race problem in the United States should be relinquished by sociologists. Beyond committing them to a value premise which compromises their claim to value neutrality, the assimilationist strategy overlooks the functions which ethnic pluralism may perform in a democratic society. . . .The application of this perspective to the racial problem should result in the recognition that the black power and black nationalist movements, to the extent that they aim at the creation of a unified and coherent black community which generates a sense of common peoplehood and interest, are necessarily contrary neither to the experience of other American minorities nor to the interests of black people. The potential for racial divisiveness--and in the extreme case, revolutionary confrontation --which resides in such movements should also be recognized, but the source of this "pathological" potential should be seen as resting primarily within the racism of the wider society rather than in the "extremist" response to it on the part of the victimized minority.
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> 2. To abandon the idea that ethnicity is a dysfunctional survival from a prior stage of social development will make it possible for sociologists to reaffirm that minority-majority relations are in fact group relations and not merely relations between prejudiced and victimized individuals. As such, they are implicated in the struggle for power and privilege in the society, and the theory of collective behavior and political sociology may be more pertinent to understanding them than the theory of social mobility and assimilation. Although general

> theories of minority-majority relations incorporating notions of power and conflict can be found in the writings of sociologists. . .it is only recently, . . .that such perspectives have found their way into sociologists' analyses of the American racial situation.
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> 3. To abandon the notion that assimilation is a self-completing process will make it possible to study the forces (especially at the level of cultural and social structure) which facilitate or hinder assimilation or, conversely, the forces which generate the sense of ethnic and racial identity even within the homogenizing confines of modern society. On the basis of an assessment of such forces, it is certainly within the province of sociological analyses to point to the possibilities of conscious intervention in the social process (by either the majority or the minority group) to achieve given ends and to weigh the costs and consequences of various policy alternative. These functions of sociological analysis, however, should be informed by an awareness that any form of intervention will take place in a political context--that intervention itself is in fact a political act--and that the likelihood of its success will be conditioned by the configuration of political forces in the society at large. Without this awareness--which is nothing more than an awareness of the total societal context within which a given minority problem has its meaning--sociological analysis runs a very real risk of spinning surrealistic fantasies about a world which is tacitly believed to be the best of all possible worlds. Whether the call of sociologists for racial assimilation in American society as it is currently organized will fall victim to such a judgment remains to be seen.[10]

Metzger's implication is inescapable: while it is now appropriate and perhaps even obligatory for blacks to explore and enjoy their own cultural heritage, there is no reason why other Americans should not do the same thing--though for some of us like the Irish, it may be almost too late.

Furthermore, in the implicit Marxism which is so powerful among Western intellectuals, there is an assumption that the only meaningful differences among human groups are social class differences--even black

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[10] L. Paul Metzger, "American Sociology and Black Assimilation: Conflicting Perspective," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 76, No. 4, January, 1971, pp. 643-644.

militancy and women's liberation are justified as class movements. In such a perspective, differences of language, religion, or national background are either irrational and ought not to be taken seriously or are a disguised attempt of the oppressor class to justify continuingoppression. A society divided along class lines and along lines of essentially economic political issues is an acceptable society, but there is no room there for divisions on issues that are primordial, ethnic, particularistic, and personal. Such issues and divisions are "irrational," which is to say that they are not to be found in the Marxist paradigm. In the words of Mr. Justice Goldberg, " I think ethnic politics are degrading."

Most American social scientists are profoundly influenced by the basic insight of the sociological tradition of Toennies, Weber, and the other giants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which sees the Western world shifting from gemeinshaft to gesellshaft from folk to urban, from particularistic to universal, from sacred to profane. To Weber and the other giants, this evolution was descriptive rather than normative--and descriptive, indeed, with a considerable nostalgia for gemeinshaft. One suspects that it has become normative for many modern observers, not only for those who engage in the pop sociology of volumes like Future Shock. To such observers, it is a good thing for men and women to give up their ethnic ties, not merely because ethnicity is unAmerican and not merely because it is politically irrational but also because it is "tribal" and "pre-modern." The persistence of ethnic identification is a form of collective regression to a prerational past which ought to be

unacceptable to educated and civilized men. In other words, since we are civilized and educated, we don't give a damn what kind of an accent our grandmother had.

Finally, there may be a political explanation for the absence of serious research on ethnic pluralism and diversity. Most of those who might do such research prefer their politics to be ideological. They place themselves on the 'liberal' end of the ideological spectrum. As they perceive the rest of the world, those groups which are especially likely to be labeled "ethnic" not only reject ideological politics but in fact are opposed to precisely those liberal social changes that American scholars support. It is no accident that Beyond the Melting Pot was written by two political deviants.

As one intellectual on the staff of a government agency remarked to me, "I suppose those people have problems of their own. The only way I can think of them is as enemies to social progress." Such a view of things is reinforced by the fact that the geographical location of many of the "ethnic" communities puts them in immediate competition with blacks for jobs and housing. Hence, their reaction to black militancy is obvious grist for the mills of the mass media. The hard-hat ethnic, on the one hand, and the black militant plus his student supporters on the other represent for many American intellectuals the most obvious conflict in society, and the intellectual has no doubt as to which side he wants to be on, the side where all the virtue is to be found.

The data to refute this myth are overwhelming, but the myth refuses to die. One can cite survey after survey after survey which shows that the thnics are more pro-integration and pro-peace than the American population in general. One can even point out that the Irish, in some ways the most hated of all the ethnis (they do include George Meany and Richard Daley in their number), are second only to the Jews in their support for "liberal" political reforms. It does no good, however, to assert that the ethnics are still very much a part of the liberal coalition, for they have been drummed out of it to be replaced, apparently, by the young, who are expected to provide nearly unanimous support for liberal causes.

Two comments must be made about this mythology. First, those who preached the new coalition from which the ethnics will be excluded cannot count--or worse, they are content never to win an election; and, second, they are simply incapable of admitting that ethnicity is an asset to liberalism. The facts are still there: ethnics are more likely to be "liberal" politically than other Americans of comparable social class, and the more ethnic a person is, the more likely he is to be "liberal." It is, one presumes, much more satisfying to lose the election than to have to cope with such disconcerting phenomena.

The net result of all these factors is that most of us who write about politics and society and who read the important journals in which articles about politics and society are presented know practically nothing about large segments of the American diversity. Few of our professional colleagues grew up in ethnic communities; only a handful of our

students are from these communities and they are, frequently with considerable encouragement from us, quite alienated from their backgrounds. Works of literature that are concerned with these communities are not widely accepted in our society, and until very recently no one has written dissertations or novels about them. Indeed, the suggestion that they might be worth writing about has been viewed as "divisive" and "separatist." Many of us may know more about what goes on in certain tribal communities of Africa and Asia than we do about what occurs in Hamtramck, Queens, or Avalon Park. This is an extraordinary phenomenon. American society is one put together only yesterday from a great variety of immigrant groups, yet our scholars, artists, and journalists seem only marginally interested in these immigrant groups. Black diversity is good, Jewish diversity is palatable, but all other forms of diversity, even if they should exist, which is unlikely, are unimportant.

3. It must be said that, on the whole, American social and cultural pluralism has worked rather well. Such a statement is a dangerous one to make, for in the present climate of scholarly opinion even the most modest compliment to American society is taken as a sign of immorality and racism. Everything about the United States must be bad, and the slightest suggestion that American society may be successful at anything must be rejected out of hand.[11] It ought to be possible, however, to steer

[11] For an almost biblical vision of America as the new Babylon and the young as a messianic nation, see Professor Kenneth Kenniston's graduation address of last June at Notre Dame. Also see the anguished cries of American reviewers in response to Revel's claim that there is more toleration for dissidents in American society than anywhere else in the world. Of course Revel's claim is self evidently true. He does not claim, as reviewers would dearly like to believe, that there is total toleration for dissidents; simply that there is more of it in the United States now than at any time in its

a middle ground. We ought to be able to say that there have been serious injustices done in the American society and that they are still being done; and, on the other hand, to also assert that the United States has probably coped more effectively with ethnic, religious, racial, and geographic diversity better than any large and complex society in the world.[12] Indeed, when one considers the size, geographic diversity, heterogeneity of the population, and the sheer newness of the society, the astonishing thing is that the nation has survived at all.

It is fashionable in some circles to make unfavorable comparisons between the United States and, let us say, Britain or Sweden. (For example, see Professor Titmuss' recent book on blood donation.) But rarely in such comparisons is it asked whether there might be differences in the countries that make comparison invalid. Britain has behind it a thousand years and more of cultural and legal heritage. It solved its major religious problems in 1689 and its major ethnic and frontier problems with the pacification of the Highlands in the middle 1700s (assuming, as the English certainly did, that the Irish were not part of their ethnic

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past history and than in any other nation of the world. One has to realize that, as Revel points out, Frenchmen can be sent to jail merely for being around when a riot occurs, and in both Canada and the United Kingdom, those eminently civilized countries so envied by intellectual Americans, men have been interened in the last year without trial. The Chicago Seven trial is cited as counterevidence, all oblivious to the fact that the seven are not in jail and probably not likely to be. The Quebec separatists are definitely in jail and, in case nobody noticed, so is the IRA.

[12]For example, one American reviewer dismissed Revel's observation that a higher proportion of American blacks go to college than do citizens of France with the statement that American blacks frequently receive poor education. Some do and some don't. Presumably, also some French young people receive poor educations; but Revel's point--ignored by the reviewer--was that America has made greater progress towards universal higher education than has France--a major accomplishment for which we are apparently not to be awarded any points.

problem). It has had only minor immigrations (again, save for the Irish, who really don't count for the British); and since the Norman invasion, virtually all of its people speak the same language. Its political and civil symbols are ancient and universally honored. It is geographically compact and less than a third the size of the United States in population. That Britain is more civilized under such circumstances is not surprising. It is surprising, however, that the society of such diverse components that the United States has stitched together in so short a time has not come apart at the seams; and, despite the alleged crises of the present moment, the seams remain relatively strong. One gets into serious trouble in many American circles for even suggesting that this phenomenon might be worth investigating. What counts is not careful analysis of American society but rather vigorous and virtuous denunciation of its immorality. The fact that Americans live in relative peace with one another in the midst of great diversity when in other parts of the world men are swatting each other for ethnic reasons is quite irrelevant.

But irrelevant or not, there are at least some of us who think it might be worth studying. Obviously, the country's richness of natural resources and its resultant economic prosperity has had something to do with the success of its pluralism One might be less inclined to go after one's neighbor with a rock, club, or knife when one has just consumed a steak fresh from the backyard barbecue. It may well be that the ultimate answer to primordial conflict around the world is universal affluence.

But perhaps more than economics are involved, for the immigrants of the early middle and middle nineteenth century were not affluent.

The Irish, for example, were impoverished and diseased fugitives from famine. Yet, while they were not particularly welcomed and did not in their turn profess too much affection for their hosts, the riots between the Irish and the WASPs were limited in number and extent.

My own hypothesis is that the cultural matrix that has made American diversity possible is denominational pluralism. The United States was a religiously pluralistic society even before it became a politically pluralistic society. The pluralism which was institutionalized in the Constitution antedated that document. It developed in the previous half century mostly because Virginia Episcopalians and Massachusetts Congregationalists learned that they had to get along with one another despite their serious religious differences. The Congregationalists, the Quakers, the Episcopalians, and the Methodists all shared one English cultural tradition; but they shared it in diversified styles, styles which were shaped by their denominational affiliations. By 1789, such diversity was so obvious to the framers of the Constitution that they did not even have to explicitly advert to it. Denominational differences among the various states had to be respected.[13] The Constitution, then, specified for the political dimension of society a heterogeneity which was already taken for granted in the common culture.

This heterogeneity was broad enough to be able to absorb the later immigrant groups when they swarmed ashore. Many native Americans

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[13]And of course the fact that the economies of these denominationally different states were also different reinforced the religious pluralism.

may not have wanted the immigrants, and many assumed that the only appropriate behavior for the immigrants was for them to become native Americans as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, the pluralistic culture of the society was such that it would be a century before the country could bring itself to act against its own self-image of diversity and begin to systematically exclude certain kinds of immigrants. Without understanding how it had been accomplished, America had arrived at a political, cultural, and social style which had made it possible for a vast diversity of different groups to live together with at least some harmony and if not with justice, still at least with the conviction that justice was in order. By our own very high standards, there was still much injustice, but at least one question ought to be asked by those who will hear not a word in defense of American pluralism: How come the standards are so high?

Horrendous injustice has been done and is being done to American blacks. Considerable injustice was done to other American groups. The Japanese were locked in concentration camps and the Germans, only too willing to fight and die for the United States against their native land, were forced to yield much of their culture and language. (In some American cities after the First World War it was impossible even to play Beethoven's music.) Those with Slavic and Italian names are still systematically excluded from important corporate offices. Jews are still subject to subtle social discrimination. There is only one Catholic president of any major American university. The Irish have become respectable--something they always desperately wanted--at the price of losing any sense of

their own history or culture. But despite all these injustices, three things still must be said. First, our incredibly variegated society has survived. Second, minority groups are treated better in the United States than they are in any other large nation of the world--and many of the small ones besides. (The American black, a tragic victim of injustice, is still in much better political, economic, and social condition than is the Catholic in Ulster.)[14] Third, the ideology of cultural diversity to which most Americans are more or less committed makes it impossible for us to be complacent at the continuation of injustice. In the three decades since Myrdahl gave a name to the American dilemma, immense progress has been made.[15] It is considered almost treasonable in some circles to point to the fact of progress. In these circles, progress is thought to be an excuse from further effort--what escapes me is why progress cannot also be conceived of as a context for further efforts.

4. For a number of different reasons, there has been a dramatic increase in interest in America's cultural heterogeneity in recent years. To some very considerable extent, this new interst in Isaacs' "basic membership group" is a black contribution to American society. For the blacks have legitimated definitively the idea of cultural pluralism. The mainline American society may have endorsed pluralism in theory, but

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[14] See Professor Richard Rose's comparison in Governing Without Consensus. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

[15] For an account of changing attitudes on racial integration in the three decades, see Andrew M. Greeley and Paul Sheatsley, "Attitudes Toward Desegregation," Scientific American, December, 1971.

in fact its basic tendencies were always assimilationist. It has now, however, become official: it is all right for blacks to have their own heritage, their own tradition, their own culture. If it is all right for the blacks, then it ought to be all right for everyone else.[16] Some blacks seem ambivalent about this contriubtion. and even on occasion dismiss the resurgence of interest in other heritages as a form of racism, but one cannot have it both ways. Once pluralism is legitimated for one group, it has become legitimated for everybody; or, as the ancient political adage puts it, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

In addition, the loss of faith on the part of many younger Americans in the optimistic, liberal rationalist vision of their predecessors and teachers has opened for these young people the question of "who am I?" once again.[17] It has been my experience that many if not most of the graduate students who have suddenly appeared in faculty offices all over the country clutching proposals for ethnic research are motivated by highly personal reasons. In the process of doing their dissertations, they want to find out who they are.

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[16]Interestingly enough, despite considerable statistical evidence to the contrary, many Americans are persuaded that what the blacks want is not cultural pluralism but separatism. In other words, the black problem is seen as the same as the Polish or German problems sixty years ago; the alternatives are either assimilation or separation. The Poles and the Germans were compelled to assimilate; the blacks are permitted to be separate. However, in fact, research evidence leaves little doubt that most blacks want exactly what most Germans and Poles wanted--not separatism but a subculture of their own within a larger social and cultural context.

[17]For example, the young Catholic scholar,Michael Novak, having written extensively on global political, religious, and philosophical issues, is now exploring the meaning of his own Slovak heritage. See his recent article in Harper's.

Both on the college campuses, then, and in the bastions of middle America, the new, or at least the newly manifested, interest in diversity is part of a cultural identity crisis. That the question who am I can arise after so many years of pretending that it is either unimportant or that it has already been solved is some evidence of how persistent and powerful the issue may be.[18]

There are two major thrusts in the new interest in diversity. The first is the "rediscovery of middle America." The social, cultural, and intellectual elites of the country have discovered that there is a substantial segment of the population living somewhere between them and the poor and the nonwhites who view social reality from an entirely different perspective. They are still patriotic Americans and for some unaccountable reason, they are afraid of crime and violence. Some of this rediscovery of middle America (or blue collar workers or white ethnics or whatever name one chooses to use) is faddist and patronizing; some of it is moralistic and self-righteous; but a good deal of it is honest and open and sympathetic. As this thrust is represented by such agencies as the Ford Foundation and the American Jewish Committee, it is a sensible and realistic comprehension that social reform and indeed

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[18] William Harwood of the Washington Post has recently suggested that the new interest in ethnicity is already out of fashion: we who were interested in those things six months ago are now no longer interested in them, so they are not important. It is this sort of arrogance on the part of those who have established themselves as the cultural arbiters of the nation that makes some people listen sympathetically to the vice president's tirades. Unquestionably, there was a journalistic fad on the subject of ethnicity, but apparently it never occurred to Mr. Harwood that such fads do not cause social reality. There just might possibly be something "out there" of which the fad is but a pale imitation.

social harmony in the United States is impossible if some groups are deliberately or undeliberately excluded from the consensus. Still, there is a tendency for some of the practitioners of this rediscovery of middle America to view middle Americans as a "problem," or at least as people with "problems." However, as empirical data begin to become available which indicate that the ethnic component of middle America is not all that hawkish or all that racist, this emphasis on problems is beginning to change.[19]

One sub-emphasis in the rediscovery of middle America is the notion that the ethnics ought to be "organized." It is argued that "ethnic militancy" can be socially positive and constructive, particularly if it is presided over by the right sort of leader. The most extreme form of "organize the ethnics" approach suggests that they ought to "get their thing together" just like the blacks have done. Then militant blacks and militant ethnics can solve the cities' problems jointly.[20]

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[19]It is still difficult, however, to persuade some of those concerned with the rediscovery of middle America that not all blue collar workers are ethnics and not all ethnics are blue collar workers. The majority of American blue collar workers are, of course, native American Protestants, and many ethnics have become upper middle class and even college professors. In fact, some data available to us at the National Opinion Research Center would indicate that college graduates with an Irish background are now more likely to pursue careers in the sciences than are graduates of Jewish background. And the Irish, like the Jews, are twice as likely to graduate from college than is the general American population. Blue collar indeed!

[20]By which I suspect it is frequently meant that alliances between the Poles and the Italians on the one hand and the blacks on the other can dispense with the Irish middlemen who have governed American cities for such a long time. On the whole, it might be a good idea, but the Irish will be excused for not thinking so.

The consistent triumphs of Steve Adiuabato, a Newark Italian politician who maintains good relations with both Mayor Gibson and Le Roi Jones while trouncing Tony Imperiale, are cited as an example of what ethnic militancy can accomplish.

I will confess to grave reservations about this "organize the ethnic" approach. First of all, I think the militant political style is becoming passé in American society, despite the broad media coverage it still receives. Secondly, the pretense of organizing the ethnics strikes me as being absurd. The ethnics are already organized and scarcely need social worker messiahs who arrive on the scene to "build community" among them. Adiuabato's success is unquestioned and admirable, but he is an extraordinarily skillful ward political type and not a community organizer, though he obviously has no objections to being considered one when such a definition provides him with more resources for his work. It is probably my own corrupt Irish heritage, but if I am given a choice between ward politicians and community organizers, I will always pick the former, if only because they tend to win. In terms of the people who live in the neighborhoods, winning is better than losing.

The other major thrust in the concern about ethnic diversity is what I would call the "rediscovery of pluralism." It is a thrust manifested by most of the articles in the present issue and obviously so by this particular article. It is, I suppose, more ordered towards thought and reflection than towards immediate ends, but it asks a fundamental question which ought to precede any action: what in the hell makes a society tick?

The cultural pluralist approach is less interested in immediate social action to alleviate problems, though it certainly applauds and supports such action and makes whatever contribution it can to it. It is more concerned about figuring out how cultural diversity persists along primordial lines in the United States and what contributions this persistence makes to the American social structure. It is an extraordinarily difficult task and one which I must confess has led to more failures than successes up to the present time. There is so little in the way of social history for the ethnic groups. There is quite an extensive literature on American Jews and a small but consistent literature on American Italians, but there is nothing in the way of social theory to provide a perspective for investigating ethnicity. No empirical data from past studies, not even agreement among survey researchers as to how questions ought to be asked, and no clear indicators as to what research and analytic methodologies which might be pertinent exist.

There are, as I see it, three different approaches to the problem: the social class approach, the political approach, and the cultural approach. In the first, ethnic differences are equated with social class differences. Thus, Herbert Gans in his Urban Villagers explains the behavior of Italians in Boston threatened by urban renewal as a class rather than a cultural phenomenon.[21] Secondly, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer in Beyond the Melting Pot argue that at least in New York City, the

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[21] One wonders if lower class Irish in Boston would have responded in the same way.

ethnic collectivities are essentially giant political interest groups without too much in the way of a correlated cultural heritage. Finally, such observers as Edward Laumann and Peter Rossi argue that there is persuasive evidence that the ethnic collectivities do indeed act as bearers of differential cultural heritages--Rossi suggests that the heritage may have to do with subtle but important differences of expectation in one's most intimate personal relationships.

The burden of the evidence that we have been piling up at the National Opinion Research Center for the past several years is strongly in support of the third position. Indeed, data we now have on the differential personality constellations of eight American white ethnic groups seems to me to offer conclusive evidence that even when social class is held constant, immense differences of personalities have persisted among these groups.

But theoretical problems persist. Is everyone ethnic?[22] Does one have to be an ethnic whether he wants to or not? For example, are Appalachian whites an ethnic group? Or are Texans? Are some basic "membership groups" in American society based on nationality, racial, or religious factors while others could be based on geographical or social class or organizational or professional factors? Are intellectuals, as I not altogether facetiously suggested, an ethnic group? What happens in an ethnically mixed marriage? Does one select one's basic membership group or does one absorb it from the parents of the same or opposite sex?

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[22] The Christian Century has recently suggested that even WASPs are ethnic.

Indeed, to what extent is basic group membership a matter of choice? Does it matter whether you consciously identify with a group or not? For example, it seems reasonably clear that most of the American Irish know very little about their own Irish heritage and think of themselves as Irish explicitly only on rare occasions. Nevertheless, our data indicate very strong correlations between Irishness and patterns of attitudes and behavior. And once we have established such patterns, are they a part of the heritage that the group brought with it from the Old World or are they a function of its experiences when it arrived in American society, experiences which in turn were functions of the shape of American society at that time? Or, finally, are they the result of where the group is in American society at the present time?

About all one can say in response to these thorny questions is that no one knows, and it is extremely difficult to sense even where one ought to begin.

With such theoretical obscurity, methodological difficulties are inevitable. The survey researcher can, of course, fall back on his beloved nominalism: American society is divided into ten major ethnic collectivities on the basis of where one's grandparents came from or what one considers to be one's principal ancestry. Then the scale of ethnic diversity is correlated with all the independent variables that happen to be on the questionnaire. The astonishing thing about such a crude procedure is that it seems to work, at least to the extent that it confirms the peristence of great diversity across ethnic lines even when social class, religion, and region of the country are held constant.

Unfortunately, there is no way in which ethnicity can be made even a pseudo-linear scale, and as the mathematically oriented readers of this article will perceive, that makes it very difficult indeed to sort out the relative influences of religion, social class, and ethnicity on human attitudes and behavior. Dummy variable multiple regression models are of some use in such situations, but they would be much more of a help if we were able to clarify our theoretical problems.

It is an interesting if embarrassing position for a social scientist to be in. The more we probe the question of primordial bonds the more obvious it becomes that they are pervasive in American society. Despite and perhaps because of our ambivalence about primordial bonds, we will never understand American society without first coping with the phenomenon of their existence. But at the present state of our knowledge we don't know quite what to do with them. Men may have traveled a long way indeed from one end of the continua represented by Parson's pattern variables to the other, from the particularistic to the universalistic, from ascription to achievement, from the diffuse to the specific; but he still seems to have kept one foot on the particularistic, diffuse and ascriptive end of the continua, and not just in his family relationships. It will take some years to be able to understand just how this has occurred and perhaps some more years to be able to make intelligent suggestions to social policymakers concerning what if anything they should do about the extraordinary survival of primordial diversity.

In the meantime, however, it has become possible for men and women to talk about it, as this issue of The Antioch Review demonstrates.

We can recall our heritage and even enjoy it,[23] if not altogether without guilt, at least with the feeling that there are some others who will understand. It has even become possible for us to begin to understand and appreciate and enjoy other people's heritages, which may be the beginning of an evolutionary step of extraordinary moment.

Celts and Saxons are killing each other once again in Ulster, as they have for centuries. In the United States, however, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and Celtic Irish Catholics get along with each other moderately well. They do not feel constrained to shoot at each other from behind the hedges or out of the windows of slums. Given the history of the two groups, that is not inconsiderable progress.

Occasionally Celts are even permitted to write for The Antioch Review.

And that's real progress.

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[23] I would have much preferred an article in which I recalled the memories of growing up Irish. But the editor rightly insisted that someone had to engage in analysis. It is a terrible thing to grow up Irish--until one considers the other possibilities.